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AUTHOR Anhalt, Mary Emily; And Others
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ABSTRACT

An action research study described and evaluated a program for improving the reading comprehension of targeted first, second, and third grade students, in a progressive suburban community in northern Illinois. The problem was noted by the researchers, who in recent years had observed a need for improvement in reading comprehension as indicated by teacher observation of classroom reading responses and assessments. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that the philosophy of whole language is enriched by a blending of systematic direct instruction of reading processes and that teachers need to consistently implement existing strategies within the curricular structure to improve comprehension. In addition, curriculum demands limit the time being spent on independent reading beyond the content areas. A review of the research literature combined with analysis of the problem settings suggests a three-faceted intervention: implementation of reading strategies to increase reading comprehension; creation of a reading workshop in the classroom; and establishment of an at-home reading incentive program. Post intervention data indicated an increase in reading comprehension due to the successful implementation of directly taught and modeled reading strategies, the facilitation of a classroom reading workshop, and the introduction of an at-home incentive reading program. (Contains 36 references and 15 figures of data. Appendixes present survey instruments, data, a literature log form, journal starters, a first-grade reading record sheet, and various other recording sheets.) (Author/RS)

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ED 406 660

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION

by

Mary Emily Anhalt
Linda Ciccone
Robert Stevens

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Art in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

Action Research Proposal
Site: St. Charles, IL
Submitted: September 21, 1995

School Teachers
Fox Ridge Elementary
St. Charles, IL

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This project was approved by

Linda J Burke

Facilitator

Gary K Hunter

Facilitator

Terry Stirling

Dean, School of Education

Dedication

To my mother, Virginia Timm Meyer, for her boundless love and support,
whose dreams for me hold no limits.
To my husband Steve, for his ceaseless encouragement and understanding,
whose belief in me allows me to follow my dreams.
To my children, Jenifer, Emily, Steve Jr. and Stephanie, for being the reason I
strive to do my best, whose existence makes it all worthwhile.
To my research partners, Linda and Bob, for their professionalism tempered
with humor, whose friendship brought this project to fruition.
M.E.M.A.

To my mom, Irene Petersen, who always had a vision of what I could do and what I could become. To my husband, Dan, and sons, Bobby, Mike, and Danny, for now and forever....I love you! To my fellow researchers, Mary Emily and Bob, my heartfelt thanks for your support and friendship. L.C.

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set high goals and reach them.

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Abstract
Submitted by
Mary Emily Anhalt
Linda Ciccone
Robert Stevens

Author: Mary Emily Anhalt
Linda Ciccone
Robert Stevens

Site: Geneva

Date: July 13, 1995

Title: Blending Strategic Reading Processes with Increased Reading Opportunities to Improve Comprehension

Abstract: This paper describes a program for improving the reading comprehension of targeted first, second and third grade students, in a progressive suburban community in northern Illinois. The problem was noted by the researchers, who in recent years had observed a need for improvement in reading comprehension as indicated by teacher observation of classroom reading responses and assessments.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that the philosophy of whole language is enriched by a blending of systematic direct instruction of reading processes and that teachers need to consistently implement existing strategies within the curricular structure in order to improve comprehension. In addition, curriculum demands limit the time being spent on independent reading beyond the content areas.

A review of the research literature combined with analysis of the problem settings suggested a three - faceted intervention: implementation of reading strategies to increase reading comprehension, creation of a reading workshop in the classroom, and establishment of an at-home reading incentive program.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in reading comprehension due to the successful implementation of directly taught and modeled reading strategies, the facilitation of a classroom reading workshop and the introduction of an at home incentive reading program.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students of the targeted first, second and third grade classes show evidence of a need for improvement in the development of reading comprehension. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observations, anecdotal records and reading response assessments.

Immediate Problem Context

The Community Unit School District is a growing one, with a current enrollment of 8768. The district covers 57 square miles with the city occupying nine square miles. Approximately 50 percent of the present student enrollment reside in the city with the other half living outside of the city (Kasarda, 1992).

The district includes one high school, grades 9-12, two middle schools, grades 6-8, with a third scheduled for opening in September, 1995. In addition, there are ten elementary schools, grades K-5. Three of these elementary schools include early childhood programs.

The targeted elementary school, opened in September of 1989, is located on the southeastern perimeter of the city. Current enrollment in this K-5 building is 538 students which also includes an early childhood program. The staff is comprised of 68 members. The school is administered by an on-site principal and a teacher leadership team comprised of a representative from each grade level. There are four sections of kindergarten, second, and third grade and three sections each of the first, fourth and fifth grade.

The racial/ethnic background of the school population is 96.8 percent White, 0.2 percent Black, 0.6 percent Hispanic, 2.5 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.0 percent Native American. Family socio-economic status covers a wide range, with 3.8 percent in the low income bracket and a majority in the middle income area (School Report Card, 1993).

Average class size is 23.7. Attendance is at a rate of 96.4 percent. student mobility at 10. 5 percent and chronic truancy is at 0 percent. The pupil-teacher ratio at the elementary level is 20.9:1 (School Report Card, 1993).

Classroom teachers are responsible for implementing and facilitating a whole language approach in language arts based on a district approved curriculum. Classroom composition is based on heterogeneous groupings. The school has a newly implemented inclusion program, with a support staff that includes a facilitator and instructional aides. In addition, there are two part-time reading specialists who service students qualifying for a reading support program. Additional support staff includes a full time learning disability resource person, a psychologist, social worker, nurse,and a speech and language therapist. Physical education, music, art and band teachers comprise the remainder of the staff.

The school community encourages engagement in the enjoyment of reading as a lifetime skill. To support this belief, children are encouraged to read through programs such as Junior Great Books, an annual book fair sponsored by the school's parent /teacher organization, and a family reading night. Individual classrooms also sponsor incentive reading programs that are in progress throughout the year.

The Surrounding Community

The Community Unit School district is located in a rural/suburban community approximately 40 miles west of a large midwestern city. The community has a population of 26,000. Its location along the Fox River has influenced a strong retail and manufacturing center that covers approximately nine square miles. The steady growth of the area has had a significant effect on the school district which has a student mobility rate of 9.9 percent (City, 1990).

The median age for the residents is 34.4 years, and median household income is $66,060. The community is predominantly white collar and the 1990 Census reports that 30 percent of the adult population has completed two or less years of undergraduate studies, and 36 percent of the adults have a bachelors, graduate or professional degree. There are 62.8 percent married persons living in the community, and 47.3 percent of these have children; 8.4 percent are single parent households (City, 1990).

Total enrollment for the district is 8768 and the racial/ethnic groups are as follows; 95.8 are White; 0.6 percent are Black; 1.9 percent are Hispanic; 1.6 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; and 0.2 percent are Native American (School Report Card, 1993).

The policy-making body of the district is a seven-member Board of Education whose members are elected to a four year term. The Superintendent of Schools is the chief executive officer of the district. The five district-wide administrators report directly to the Superintendent of Schools. Their areas of responsibility are business and fiscal management; general administration personnel; staff development and instruction; facilities and transportation; and special education and pupil services.

The school community supports education as evidenced by citizen

involvement in the Professional Partners Program, Education Foundation, Curriculum Advisory Council and Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

Regional and National Context of Problem

In 1969, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, James E. Allen Jr., declared "failure to acquire basic reading skills and a desire to read as being a barrier to success that for many young adults produces the misery of a life marked by poverty, unemployment, alienation, and in many cases crime." At that time, 4.3 million Americans were considered functionally illiterate (Carlson, 1972). The number of Americans who can not read and write sufficiently has grown to more than 23 million (Project Literacy, 1987). It is the supposition of the action researchers that students' poor reading comprehension skills may be related to inadequate reading instruction.

A 1973 study (Maffei) found that students had not been exposed to a variety of reading skills deemed necessary for comprehension of subject materials. As a response to a 1992 study by Barman, Armbruster of the University of Illinois concluded that students are not receiving effective instruction in how to learn from reading materials that aid in the construction of deep understandings of richly connected knowledge.

According to Illinois Goal Assessment Program state performance standards the state reading scores for third grade students show 26 percent not meeting state report card goals. The district's performance for 1994 was 293. The targeted school's third grade students' performance for 1994 was 277 on a 0-500 scale (School Report Card, 1993).

As the district continues to embrace the whole language philosophy, teachers have moved away from the view that reading is a set of isolated skills and are viewing reading as a process which conveys and recreates meaning.

A problem with reading comprehension has become a concern of educators.

Independent reading, both in school or out of school, is strongly associated with gains in reading achievement (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1993). One of the most surprising findings of classroom research of the 1970s and 1980s was the small amount of time that children spent actually reading texts. Estimates ranged from 7 to 15 minutes per day from the primary to the intermediate grades (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985). Allocating ample time for actual text reading and ensuring that students are actually engaged in text reading during that time are among teachers' most important tasks in comprehension instruction (Fielding & Pearson, 1994).

Recommendations based on the research done by the Commission on Reading (Anderson et al., 1985) states that children should spend more time in independent reading. Gains in reading achievement have been associated with independent reading whether in or out of school. Children in grades three to four should be reading a minimum of two hours per week.

Recommendations by the Commission on Reading state that teachers should devote more time to comprehension instruction. National research has shown that the majority of American classrooms are lacking in direct comprehension instruction (Anderson et al., 1985). This same research has collected evidence leading to a correlation between teacher-led instruction in reading strategies and success in comprehension achievement.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

The Denver Reading Attitude Survey (Rhodes, 1993) (Appendix A) was selected as a tool to be administered to every student in the targeted first, second and third grade classrooms. Modifications in format were made to accommodate the developmental level of students. It was determined that a simplified version would facilitate the administration of the survey. The findings of this survey were used as an initial step in determining which students would be selected for case study. The primary objective of using the Denver Reading Attitude Survey (Appendix A) was to identify students who demonstrated low self-esteem toward reading competence, spent minimal time reading at home, and did not consistently demonstrate an ability to make connections between written text and real life application.

Upon analyzing results from the Denver Reading Attitude Survey (Figures 1,2, and 3) a selected group of six students was chosen as a focal group from each of the targeted first, second and third grade classes. These students were chosen on the basis of responses to specifically selected questions reflecting low self-concept of reading ability, limited time spent in outside of school reading and making appropriate connections between written text and real life application (Appendix B). Questions 6,8,11,13 and 15 were chosen by the researchers as reflecting self-concept of reading ability, questions 1 and 3 as reflecting time spent reading, and questions 9 and 10 as demonstrating an ability to make connections between written text and real life

application.

A 1-3 point scale was assigned to the selected responses, 3 points being assigned for an Almost Always response, 2 points being assigned to a Sometimes response, and 1 point being assigned to a Never response. Each category of questions were then totaled both for the entire class and for each individual student. These totals were then averaged and converted to a percentage . The individual results were compared with the class average for each category to identify a targeted group of six students for each of the three classes as shown in Figures 1,2 and 3.

As represented in Figures 1,2 and 3, the targeted students fell below the class average in one or more of the identified areas. Consideration was also given to students, who in the researchers' opinion, failed to respond to the survey in a manner reflective of observed performance.

Through consultation with the site's reading resource facilitator, it was determined that the Basic Reading Inventory (Johns, 1994) (Appendix C) would be highly effective in determining the independent reading level, instructional reading level and frustrational level for this targeted group of individual students. In addition the results helped discern topical, inferential, evaluative and factual types of comprehension questions with which the students were demonstrating a pattern of difficulty.

The six students from each classroom selected as a result of the modified Denver Reading Survey (Appendix A) were individually administered the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix C) on a one-to-one basis. Analysis of the data of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D,E,F) narrowed the selection of students per classroom targeted for inclusion as case studies based on the components of oral comprehension performance.

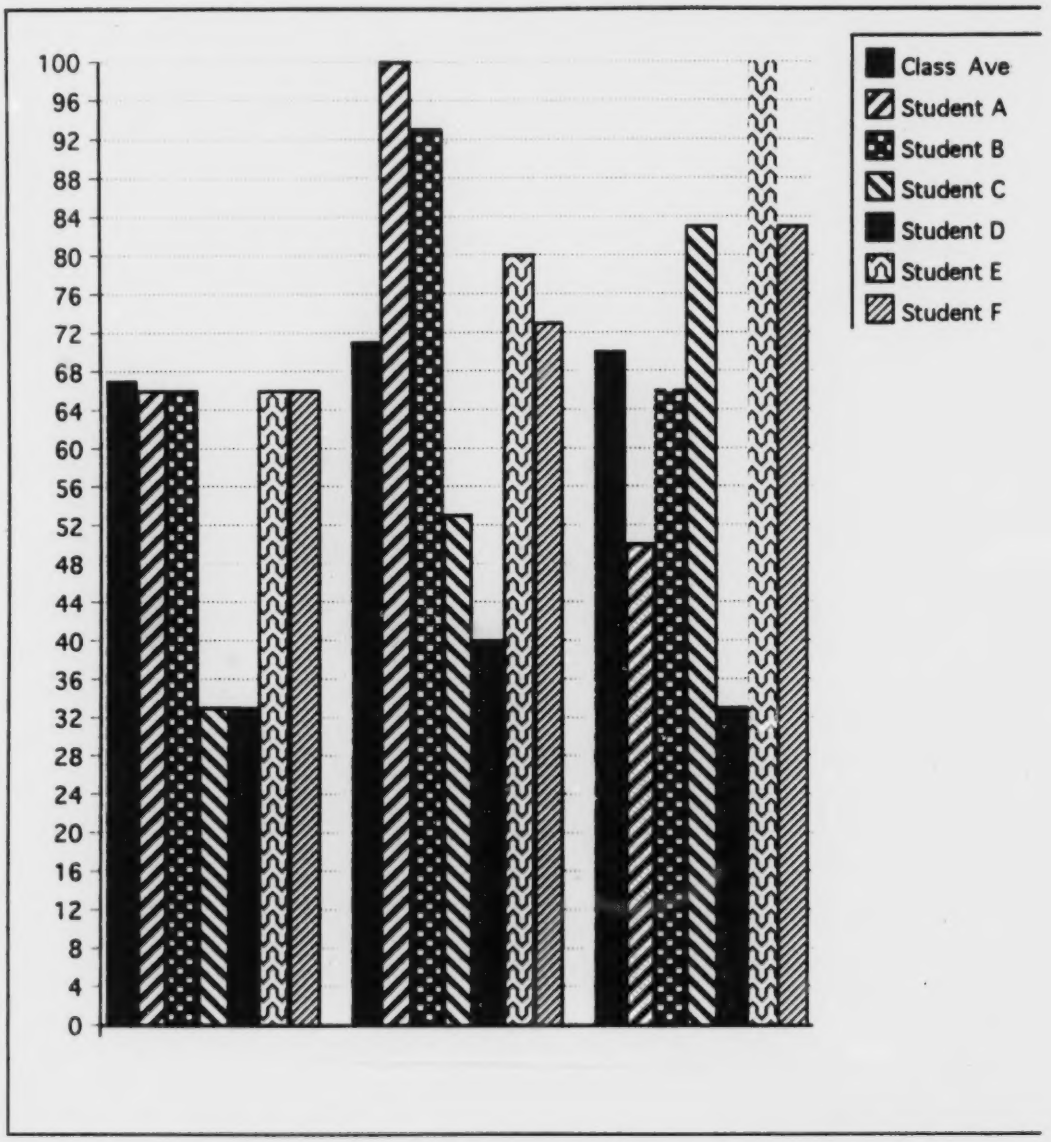

Figure 1

First Grade
Results of the Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey

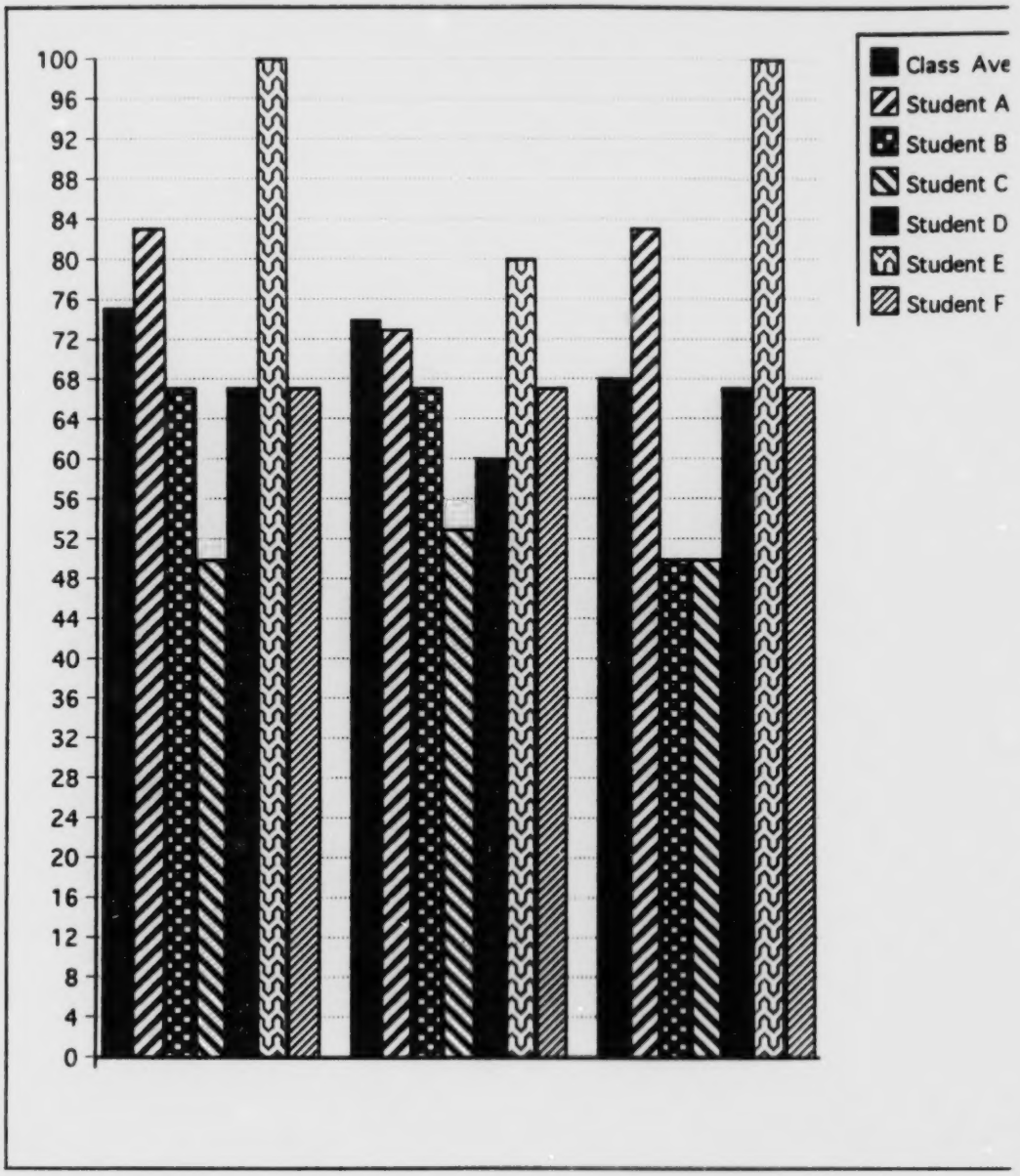

Figure 2

Second Grade
Results of the Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey

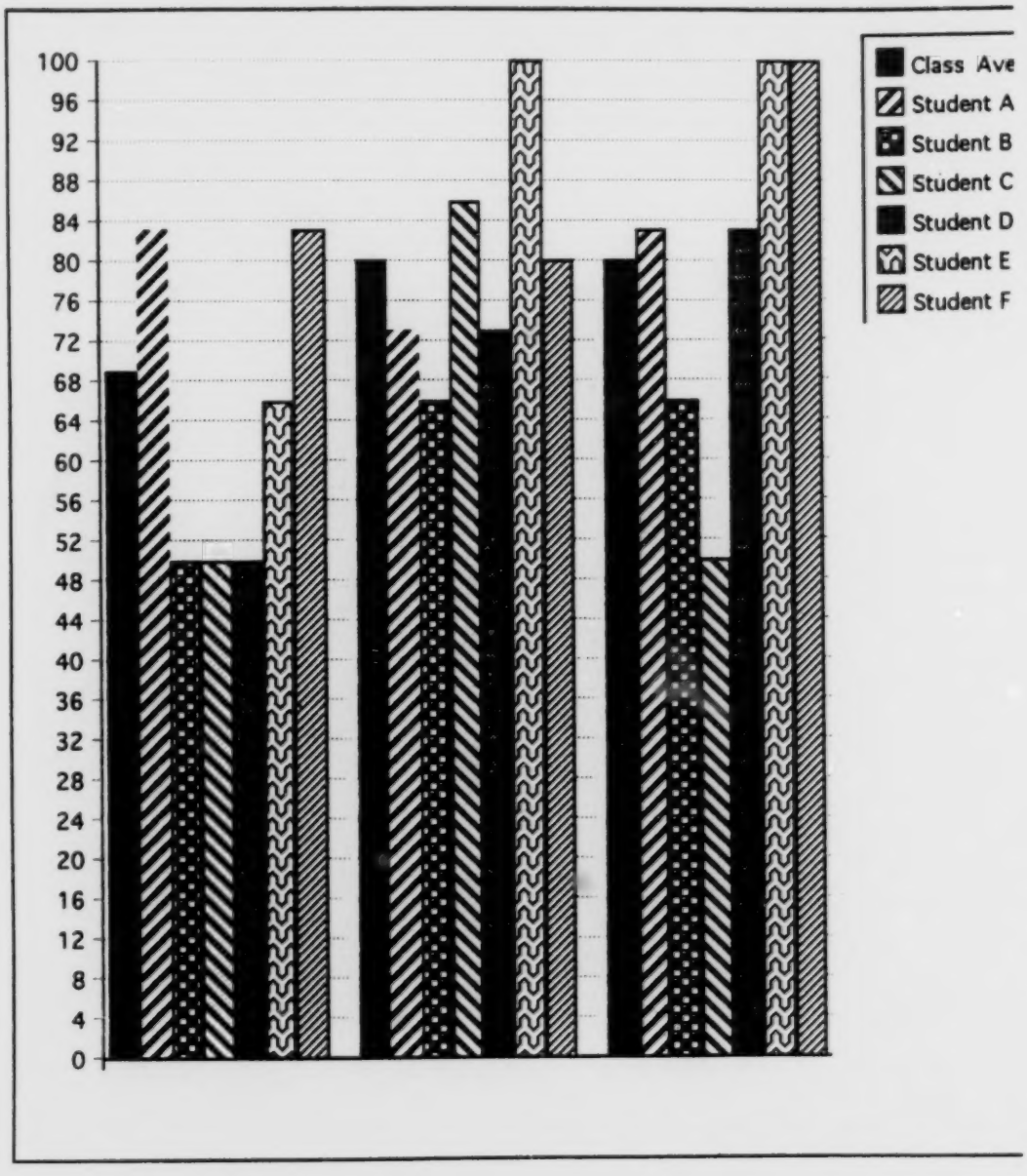

Figure 3

Third Grade
Results of the Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey

In explanation of Appendix D, E,and F it should be noted that the data displaying " ratio missed" is represented by the number of questions missed in comparison to the total number of questions asked for each category. For example, in Appendix D, Student A missed 4 of the 30 factual questions asked.

The analysis of the results of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix C) in addition to the results of the Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey (Appendix A) and classroom observations of the researchers provided the necessary information for selecting students targeted for individual case study.

A Reading Interview (Roots and Wings, 1991) (Appendix G) was then administered by the teacher to each of the final four targeted students per classroom during which further information concerning individualized assessments of reading were documented.

The Retelling Assessment (Roots and Wings, 1991) (Appendix H) was administered to the four students in the targeted classrooms. It was chosen as part of the data collection because it is a district curricular assessment tool used in first, second and third grade for determining sense of story structure and depth of comprehension. This tool also provided the researchers with guidelines for developing strategic reading lessons.

Probable Cause

The literature suggests problems concerning reading comprehension can be attributed to several underlying causes. Data to indicate probable cause were gathered from a variety of sources: interviews, analysis of curriculum and assessment of student performance.

An examination of the research of the differences between poor and successful readers has shown that experiences such as repeated failure, misconceptions about reading and inappropriate attributions can lead to

serious anxieties toward reading and low self-esteem. Poor readers, having had such experiences, lose confidence in their ability to be successful. From this they develop a negative attitude toward reading or adopt a passive approach to avoid shame and failure (Johnston & Winogred, 1985).

In consultation with the site reading resource facilitator, as well as referring to Cover Craft, (1995), it was determined that the readability of certain core books was not grade level appropriate. According to Allington (1983), comprehension is diminished by non-fluent reading which is the result of poor readers habitually attempting material which is too difficult for them.

Research has shown that teacher training lacks provisions which teach the appropriate implementation of reading strategies. Although teachers are familiar with various reading strategies they are not taught how to use them (Reinking, Mealey & Ridgeway, 1993).

Johnson (1995) found that the scope of instructional practice prohibits reading improvement through teachers' tendency to focus opportunities for classroom reading towards the more successful readers. The result of this is that non-fluent readers, having had this type of experience which limits their opportunities to practice reading, only read word by word and are unable to approach reading in systematically meaningful chunks.

Comprehensive studies by Leinhardt, Zigmond, and Cooley (1981) have shown that teachers do not provide an adequate amount of direct instruction. The data collected indicates they also found that the curriculum guides provided are sketchy, at best, in their contents regarding strategies necessary for fostering good reading.

Research suggests that reading achievement is directly related to the amount of time provided for independent reading in the classroom. According

amount of time provided for independent reading in the classroom. According to experts in the problem field a minimal percentage of total class time is devoted to reading (Anderson et al., 1985).

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Analysis of probable cause data suggested poor reading comprehension skills in the first, second and third grade level was attributed to inadequate reading instruction. The literature search for solution strategies found that reading comprehension deficits can be remediated with greater success in the early grades. The literature also indicated that to increase student success at reading teachers must provide a combination of ample time for reading of developmentally appropriate materials, direct strategy instruction, and opportunities for collaboration and discussion with and among students.

Increased Reading Time

Research regarding the benefits of increased reading time indicates that a primary reason is to provide children with the opportunity to put to use the skills and strategies that are necessary for reading comprehension (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). According to Stallman's (1991) study (cited in Fielding and Pearson, 1994) actual reading time is one of the most powerful tools for building a knowledge base. Research in the early 1980s consistently revealed that an adequate knowledge base increased success through a reciprocal relationship with reading comprehension (Beck, Omanson, & McKeown, 1982). Fielding and Pearson recommend "of time set aside for reading instruction, students should have more time to read than the combined total allocated for learning about reading and talking or writing about what has been read" (1994, p. 63).

Cross-Age Tutoring

The benefits of cross-age tutoring have been substantiated through

research that found that with proper training and support students can successfully tutor other students. The tutor and tutee both benefit academically. Tutor's preparation of materials strengthens an ability to apply skills while the tutee is the benefactor of immediate feedback and correction. Student tutors have an advantage over adults in that they may more readily understand tutees' problems due to a similar cognitive level (Gaustad, 1993). Peer tutoring has been recognized as a superior method for instructional assistance. Decades of research have shown that peer tutoring can have a dramatic impact on student reading comprehension, self-esteem and the overall school climate (Gaustad, 1993).

Teacher Modeling

According to Goodman (cited in Tierney, 1990) comprehension is viewed as a constructive process where the reader is involved in "an intricate creation of meanings reflecting an interweaving of their own ideas and those suggested by the text." (p. 37) It is suggested in research literature that comprehension instruction, in order to be successful, must begin with teacher modeling of effective strategies. Successful modeling is dependent upon the teacher's ability to clearly understand the process involved. One of the pitfalls of a sophisticated reader, such as an educator, is an automation of comprehension strategies. A teacher must therefore reestablish an ability to deautomotize the reading process in order for effectively model the skills utilized.

Read Alouds

According to Hoffman, Roser and Battle (1993) research evidence and testimony to the value of reading aloud to children has shown that it is one of the most important activities for building the knowledge base for successful comprehension. Components of a truly literate environment would include

reading aloud daily from a variety of quality children's literature, modeling from teachers, parents and siblings and regular engaged discussion about books (Trelease, 1989). These examples of sophisticated readers model a variety of strategies with which to approach the test (Trelease, 1989). The language interaction of read alouds play a major part in furthering the goal of understanding meaning-making strategies (Hoffman et al., 1993). Dialogue with the reader's audience is a powerful component instrumental in developing a knowledge base encompassing story structure, grammar, vocabulary and a variety of literary genres (Bridge, 1989). According to McCormick (1977) when teachers read aloud to their students the comprehension and vocabulary test scores of the students increase significantly. Quality read aloud experiences are obtained through frequent consistent reading opportunities. Along with this, choice and organization of the literature followed up by response opportunities are essential.

Mini-Lessons

For every teacher who is moving from traditional means to child centered programs, mini-lessons provide the core of instructional practice. In essence, the mini-lessons translate teacher goals and objectives into the active learning structure of the classroom. The close of the mini-lesson offers opportunities for the students to reflect upon the literacy experience and share what they have learned. When children express their knowledge they acquire ownership of their learning. According to Durkin as cited in Spiegel (1992) the danger with mini-lessons is that teachers may only touch the surface and the child, as a result, may only be able to do the task at hand and not transfer it beyond.

Time Spent Reading

Goodlad (cited in Atwell, 1987) found that students in grades K-6 spend an inadequate amount of time in the classroom engaged in reading . From this practice in traditional classrooms, students have interpreted this to mean that sustained reading holds a low priority (Atwell, 1987). On the contrary, the atmosphere created in a reading workshop encourages students to engage written text in a variety of ways creating and renewing a meaningful experience giving value to the text itself and the time being spent.

Reading Workshop

Bissex (1980) noted that researchers have found that a reading workshop helps to facilitate an individualized pace providing opportunities for more one to one teacher response time. The structure found in reading workshops promote an atmosphere which allows students to continue learning their natural reading process. The educator's role is seen as coach, encourager and provider of direct instruction (Avery, 1993).

Research shows that students are more likely to be successful learners when they are provided with clear task objectives reinforced by direct teaching (Duffy, Roehler & Putman, 1987). Additional research confirms that teacher directed instruction and clearly defined objectives are characteristics of effective reading programs (Adams, 1990). According to Yatvin (1991) a schoolwide program must ensure a distribution of content and materials over the grades in a rational and orderly manner. The basis of systematic instruction is on an identified scope of goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are used to design specific activities. Direct instruction, in its truest form, focuses on strategies, not skills. The goal of direct instruction is to provide students with a variety of strategies to meet the challenge of reading (Duffy & Roehler, 1987).

Spiegel (1992) believes that:

bridges can and must be built between whole language and more traditional approaches to literacy instruction to enable teachers to blend the best of both in order to help every child reach his or her full literacy potential. (p.43)

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As a result of increased instructional emphasis on strategic reading processes during the period of September 1995 through December 1995, the targeted first, second and third grade students will increase reading comprehension as measured by structured observation, student reading responses and teacher and student assessments.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Implement reading strategies that increase comprehension.
2. Create a reading workshop in the classroom.
3. Establish an at-home reading incentive program.

Action Plan for the Intervention

1. Implementation of reading strategies
   A. address deficiencies of reading comprehension skills of the targeted students
   B. the selected strategies will be taught throughout the instructional day in the targeted First ,Second and Third Grade classrooms during the first semester of the 1995 - 1996 school year
   C. direct instruction of strategic reading process skills
      1. pre- reading

a. brainstorming

b. prediction

c. KWL

d. Semantic mapping

2. reading

a. Directed Reading - Thinking Activity

b. making inferences

3. post reading

a. sequence

b. summarize

c. evaluate

d. QAR

e. think aloud

2. Create a reading workshop in the classroom

A. to enhance an atmosphere of literary interaction in the classroom

B. implemented for thirty minute daily sessions during the course of the first semester of the 1995 - 1996 school year

1. Reader's Chair

2. Book Talks

3. Choral reading

4. Creative Dramatics

C. a combination of student / teacher selected reading material

1. Poetry

2. Thematic Literature

a. rain forests

b. weather

c. Native Americans

d. immigration

3.Trade Books

3. Establish an at home reading incentive program

A. to increase the amount of time spent in recreational reading

B. a minimum of sixty minutes of documented weekly recreational reading at home during the first semester of the 1995 - 1996 school year

C. a variety of student reading selections to support and enhance application of reading strategies taught at school

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the interventions, the modified Denver Reading Survey (Appendix A) was administered to the entire student population of the first, second and third grade classrooms as a pre-screening to give the researchers an understanding of the attitudinal composition of the classroom. It was again administered at the conclusion of the intervention period to determine the success of the interventions.

In order to begin the process of narrowing the number of students in the target groups, students were selected on the basis of results of selected questions in the initial administration of the modified Denver Reading Survey (Appendix B). As the researchers prepared to select specific students for case study, the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix C) was administered on an individual one-to-one basis. From the results of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D,E,F) the researchers selected four students from each of the targeted first, second and third grade classrooms to be case study participants. The Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D,E,F) was also utilized to isolate

specific comprehension strategies for direct instruction.

During the course of the intervention those students in the case studies were given two Retelling Assessments (Appendix H). The first was given at the onset of the case study to each of the targeted students on an individual one-to-one basis using an oral method. It was again administered at the end of the intervention period following the format. The comparison results were used in determining the effectiveness of the intervention strategies.

As a second source of assessment, a Reading Interview (Appendix G) was given twice. The first was given at the onset of the case study to each of the targeted students on an individual one-to-one basis using an oral method. It was again administered at the end of the intervention period following the format. The comparison results were used in determining the effectiveness of the intervention strategies.

Throughout the course of the intervention, anecdotal records were kept by each of the researchers to document observations of individual case study students as well as a methods of record keeping of the actual strategy implementation. These records were used at the end of the intervention period to reflect on student growth and the success of the implementation of the intervention strategies.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The terminal objective of the action plan was directed at improving reading comprehension of the targeted first, second and third grade students as measured by structured observation, student reading responses, and teacher and student assessments.

The implementation of the reading strategies directed at improving comprehension, the creation of reading workshop, and the establishment of an at- home reading incentive program were selected to effect the desired outcomes. The students were chosen for case study during the third week of school. Selected reading strategies were directly taught and modeled during the instructional day in the targeted first, second and third grade classrooms throughout the course of the intervention. The strategies implemented were selected by the researchers to strengthen the areas of concern in reading comprehension and for their adaptability to the developmental needs.

Reading Workshops were created in each of the targeted classrooms. The original plan for thirty minute daily sessions was modified by the researchers based on the individual constraints of classroom scheduling and the developmental needs within each grade level.

The at home reading incentive program was established within each classroom to increase the amount of time spent in recreational reading. During the intervention it was found by the researchers that modifications in the amount of reading time required needed to be altered to reflect the student capabilities within each targeted classroom.

Interventions

Implementation in the targeted classrooms included three planned interventions. For the sake of clarity, the first intervention involving implementation of specific reading strategies will be discussed as they applied in all three classrooms. The second intervention, reading workshop and the third intervention, an at home reading incentive program will be discussed as they occurred within each targeted classroom.

The first intervention in the targeted classrooms involved implementation of a variety of reading strategies. The strategies were taken from, but not limited to, a cluster provided by the researchers' district. The researchers determined that the strategies to be taught and modeled would be selected on the basis of information obtained from analyzing the results of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix C). It was determined that a pattern of difficulty in reading comprehension of the targeted students fell under the category of factual questions. As a result of these findings several strategies including a story web graphic organizer and Pose a Question (in which students are directed to keep a specific question in mind while reading) were used to assist the students in focusing on specific story elements.

In addition, comprehension questions of an inferential type were addressed through the use of strategies, including Say Something, in which partners orally react to what has been read. This provided opportunities to model both the interactions with the text as well as the thinking processes used by proficient readers. RAP (Read a paragraph, Ask yourself what was the main idea and Put the main idea and details into your own words) is a strategy that is useful to a reader who struggles with understanding the text. Another strategy that was used is RAQ (Reflection Questions on what happened and Anticipation

Questions of what will happen next) which aids the student in making logical connections with the text.

Evaluative comprehension requires the student to take the available information from the text to make a logical connection. Strategies used to strengthen this area of comprehension included CLOZE and Connect Two, a strategy in which students are challenged to create lists based on important aspects of the text and encouraged to make connections between different items on the list, such as the main character and the setting. A Character Web is another useful strategy implemented to help the student expand understanding of a character's attributes and enable the reader to evaluate the character's impact on the text.

The area of vocabulary comprehension was strengthened through the use of several teaching strategies and tools. One such strategy was Words on the Wall, which encouraged the student to seek out the proper spelling of commonly used words which had been previously posted on the wall. Mix and Match uses a format of having students connect two related columns of words in a meaningful arrangement. Vocabulary Bookmark and Vocabulary Notebook are tools used by students to record new, unfamiliar or unusual words from their reading for later discussion in small groups, with the whole class, or both. The Vocabulary ABC employs the use of a paper divided into 26 sections representing each letter of the alphabet which is then used during reading by the student to identify interesting words beginning with those letters. With both of these strategies it is essential to extend the activity to include not only discussion but also to encourage the written or pictorial application of the word in proper context.

Reading Workshop

First Grade

The second intervention in the targeted first grade class was a Reading Workshop Program. An individual response journal was given to each student in which the students were given opportunities to respond to experiences with literature. Students worked as a large group and later in groups of two or three as they worked with different core books from the district. These types of experiences were encouraged, rather than individual reading experiences, in an effort to meet the developmental needs of first graders. It is important to note that the students received individual experience through a daily activity known as STAR Time. This provided the students with opportunities to pick and experience a variety of text. STAR Time was a daily experience and the researcher found it interesting that the students often requested to use some of the books from the Reading Workshop Program in their STAR TIME experiences. The researcher observed students experiencing success with these books due to the assistance received during the group activities.

At the start of each Reading Workshop, a list of helpful vocabulary was generated in a collaborative effort by the students and the teacher . This list provided a launching pad for the students to have rich and meaningful experiences with a variety of core books from the district. The Reading Workshops were initially held for twenty minutes on a daily basis. As the students continued to mature the Reading workshops were lengthened to 30 minutes. Each Reading Workshop was ended with a chime which let the students know they needed to bring closure to their reading for the day.

During the Reading Workshop the researcher had conferences with the students to assess their individual progress and to get input as to how the

students were feeling about themselves as readers. The researcher also used this time to informally observe groups of readers. These experiences provided the researcher with valuable information for this project and for report cards.

Second Grade

In the second grade classroom Reading Workshop was established during the first week of school. Reading Workshop was implemented 3 times a week for a period of 15 minutes. It was later increased to 30 minutes as the students became more capable as readers and responders. Reading Workshop began immediately after lunch recess. A variety of literature genres were made available for student self selection. Upon entering the classroom each student selected a book and took out their Literature Log (Appendix I) The Literature Log was used to record their self selected reading materials by date, title, author, and written response. Before workshop began a number was randomly chosen by a student . The number chosen indicated what should be focused on while reading. The list of ideas titled "What We Can Write About Books" was displayed on chart paper in the classroom. This list was generated during a whole group discussion when we talked together about what we could write for a response (Appendix J).

Once the purpose for reading was established a timer was set. Initially a time span of 10 minutes for reading and 5 minutes for recording was allocated. Each day a group of 5 students was selected by the researcher to share their Literature Log entries with the class. This was a very popular part of the day and one in which a rich dialogue about books was exchanged.

During the second quarter of the school year demands of the second grade curriculum permitted Reading Workshop to occur twice a week for 30 to 40 minutes for book selection, recording, and sharing.

Third Grade

The second intervention in the targeted third grade classroom was a Reading Workshop program. An individual reading response journal was given to each student in which to record at the conclusion of each daily workshop session. A list of journal response starters (Appendix K) was attached to the inside cover of the response journal. New journal starters were introduced during the third month of school (Appendix L).

Students were given the opportunity to independently choose reading material. A list of possible reading sources was brainstormed by the class in the hopes of encouraging the students to engage in a diverse selection of reading choices. The Reading Workshop was introduced as an opportunity to explore a rich variety of literature genres. The Reading Workshop was held daily for half hour sessions immediately following lunch recess. A timer was set in order to mark the end of reading and signal the beginning of the written response.

During Reading Workshop the researcher met with individual students for periodic conferences. These conferences were used for oral reading assessment, to discuss choice of reading material and to check reading comprehension. Throughout the course of the Reading Workshop students were given opportunities to present book talks, make recommendations or make presentations about their books at the end of several sessions each week, depending upon time and need.

Incentive Reading Program

First Grade

The at home Reading Incentive Program was based on the theme "Reading is an Adventure". The program was made up of three major components. The corner- stone component was the reading take home sheet.

Each student was responsible for one sheet per week. During the first quarter of school the sheets (Appendix M) were created around the class progress board the theme of which was a treasure hunt on a deserted island.

The record sheets were divided into five to six minute nightly reading slots. The completion of each slot was marked by filling in an "x marks the spot" marker. At the bottom of each record sheet there was a space to record the titles and authors read during that week. There was also a portion allowing parents and students to work together to assess the reading experience that took place while completing the reading record sheet.

During the second quarter it was determined by the researcher that the targeted first grade class was ready for an increased amount of time required for each reading record sheet. Parents and students were interviewed and found to be in agreement with the researcher. The reading record sheet (Appendix N) and the theme for the second quarter were modified. The second quarter class progress board, and reading record sheet, were created to be an airplane adventure. It was important to modify the class progress board and reading record sheets to meet the developmental stage of the first grade students. Each night the students were required to read for 12 minutes instead of 5 minutes.

The second component was the class progress chart. Each student 's individual reading record sheet was collected. A class goal of 20 or more sheets per week was agreed upon by both the researcher and the students. If the class goal was achieved, the progress chart was changed once a week. A marker was moved through a series of places on the island during the first quarter and from cloud to cloud during the second quarter. Both boards were designed so that after nine successful weeks the class reached the progress board goal. The class then had a reading celebration to which they brought

treats and shared books they enjoyed. The time was also used to interview students as to how they felt about the experience and themselves as readers.

The third component was a reading record (Appendix O). On this weekly record, student progress was recorded. Any student who fell behind in the program was spotted and assisted immediately. It also helped the researcher to observe any increase in the number of books or time spent reading by the students. This was also very helpful during parent-teacher conferences.

Second Grade

The second planned intervention, an at home incentive reading program, was implemented during the third week of school in the targeted second grade classroom. A letter explaining the at home reading program was sent home with the students (Appendix P). The theme selected by the researcher was "2C's School of Readers." During the first quarter of the school year each student was required to read a minimum of 1 hour at home a week. Required at home reading time increased to 1 hour and 15 minutes during the second quarter of the school year. The reading could be done independently or as a shared reading, parent and child together.

A recording sheet (Appendix Q) was sent home every Thursday on which the student recorded their at home reading . For every 15 minutes the student was engaged in reading, they colored in one fish. A parent signature was required on the weekly recording sheet.

At school each student had an underwater scene sheet (Appendix R) which they kept in their reading folder. A fish sticker was given for each hour of reading done at home. The students placed these stickers on their sheet. This became their individual reading record of time spent at home reading.

As a class record a wall in the second grade classroom became the sea.

For every 5 hours of reading done at home by the class, a paper fish was placed on the wall.

It was noted by the researcher that for the first several weeks of the intervention the stickers kept most students motivated to read at home, but by the end of the sixth week the class total hours read was significantly lower than the previous week. Accompanying the recording sheet for the seventh week of the incentive program the researcher gave each student a gummy worm to help them "catch more fish." This small incentive was used several times by the researcher during the course of the implementation when a decrease in time spent reading was noted.

During the second quarter, another incentive was added by the researcher. When 1000 hours of at home reading was recorded on the wall, 200 fish, the class would earn a pizza party, provided for by the researcher. A chart was placed in the classroom which kept a running record of hours earned and hours needed to reach one thousand. This goal was reached during the third quarter of the school year.

Third Grade

The Incentive Reading Program was introduced to the third grade class during the third week of school. The program was planned around the theme "Reading is the Key." All children were presented with a personalized key ring on which to store keys earned for each hour of reading. Each student was assigned a display hook for their key ring. Children were given a reading recording sheet each Thursday on which to record time spent reading (Appendix S). Parental signatures were required each week to verify the number of hours read. A minimum of two hours per week was required during the first quarter. To help the children keep track of their reading sheet each

child was given a magnet-backed key with which to affix the recording sheet to their refrigerator at home. Each Thursday reading sheets were collected and hours tallied. Students were given a key for each hour read. The totals were tabulated by the entire class and then converted into hours, days, weeks, and eventually, months. A running total was posted on a class chart throughout the course of the intervention.

Several weeks into the intervention a marked decrease in total hours read was noted. Increased motivation was introduced by announcing that students could earn a key for each hour increased over the previous week's total in addition to the actual hours read for the week. Several weeks later a Golden Key award was instituted. This became a key that traveled with a different student each week who was chosen on the basis of chance. For each hour read, a student earned a chance in the weekly drawing for the Golden Key.

At the end of the first quarter a Curl-Up-And -Read Celebration was held. An afternoon was set aside during which the students were encouraged to bring a pillow, blanket and several favorite books. This celebration was highly anticipated by all students and proved to be a very worthwhile culmination to the first quarter Incentive Reading Program.

Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

As was previously discussed in Chapter 2, the interventions were implemented for whole class instruction, however, four students from each of the targeted classrooms were selected for case study. It was felt by the researchers that by using this format it would provide an in-depth understanding of individual students as well as provide better insight into the impact of the planned interventions and methods of assessment. Each of the researchers will present one inclusive case study and three summative case studies.

First Grade

Student A

Student A could be described as a student whose academic and social development were appropriate for his grade level. He was a hard working student who was very aware of the feelings of others. He demonstrated a desire to please others. He was critical of his performance and that of his peers. At the onset of the implementation the researcher, through observation and interview, found the student had a less than accurate understanding of his needs as a reader. One example of this was his initial response to the Modified Denver Reading Survey. He gave responses to several questions showing that he was unaware of his areas of weakness.

The analysis of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D) revealed a need to strengthen Student A's vocabulary and factual comprehension. During the course of the intervention several strategies were implemented to assist in strengthening the student's reading skills. Story Webs and Graphic Organizers were among those used to increase Students A's factual comprehension. To increase the student's vocabulary a class word wall was used along with student dictionaries . Strategies were also introduced including Mix-n-Match and Vocabulary ABC. The tools and strategies were introduced to the class during the Daily Reading Workshops. During conferences held in the reading workshop the researcher determined that Student A's vocabulary challenges were coming more from a limited sight vocabulary than from an inability to make connections. The researcher found that the student responded very well to the tools and strategies used. He communicated to the researcher that he found the student dictionary to be very helpful.

At the onset of the at home Incentive Reading Program Student A

demonstrated frustration with the beginner level books that were being sent home. As the program continued the student communicated less frustration and began to communicate his focus on completing books rather than a fixation on the amount of time it took to complete each book. The researcher, in reflection, decided that in the future it would be helpful to emphasize that there would be no prize for the most books read but that the students should focus their attention on the fact that they were committing the appropriate amount of time to reading outside of school. It is important to note that throughout the case study Student A's parents demonstrated support in written communication and discussion during conferences.

Upon analysis of the Modified Denver Reading Survey, the researcher found several interesting results as shown in Figure 4. The pre and post tests show a decline in time spent reading. The researcher found that the student, through the course of the case study, had developed a more realistic view of the amount of time spent reading. Student A also communicated that he better understood the questions during the second administration of the survey. Comparison of the pre and post tests also demonstrated a decline in Student A's self concept score. The researcher attributes this to two factors. The student was not developmentally able to self assess during the first administration of the survey. He wanted to please. The other factor that the researcher considered was that during the course of the intervention the student, while becoming a better reader, felt frustration as he was challenged to grow. This then impacted his response to the second administration of the survey. The researcher has seen this as a positive experience which has fostered further growth in Student A's reading skills.

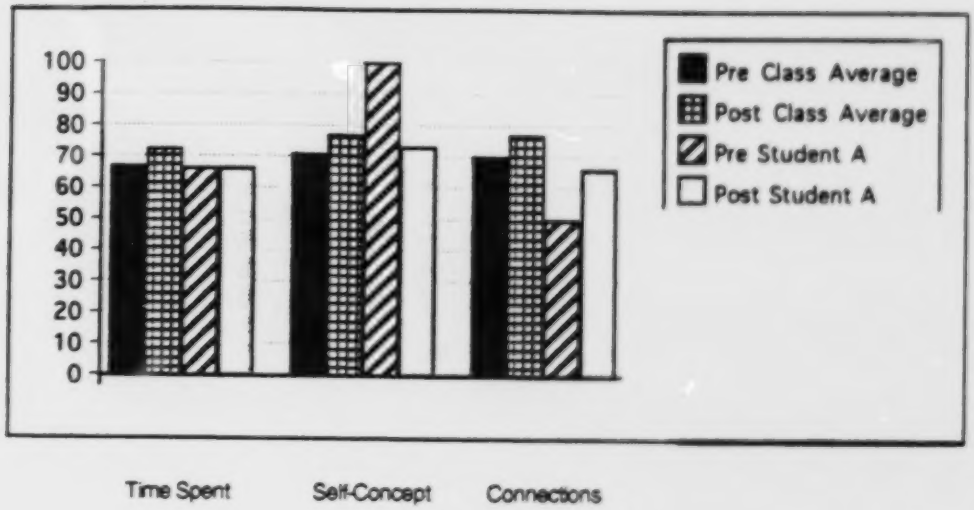

Figure 4

First Grade Student A

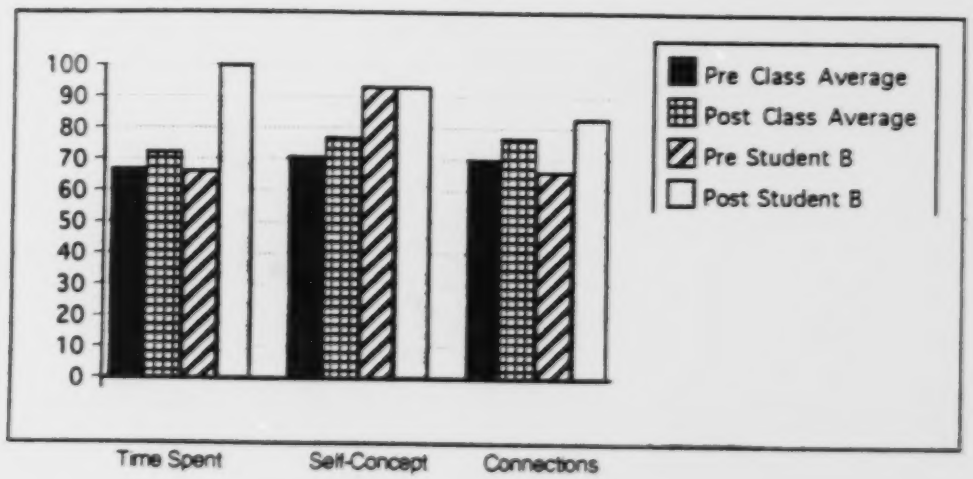

Figure 5

First Grade Student B

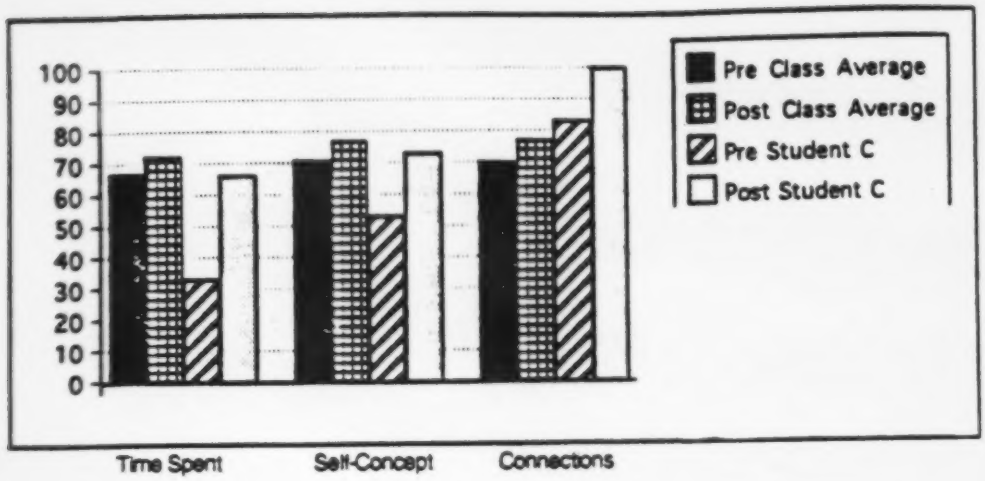

Figure 6

First Grade Student C

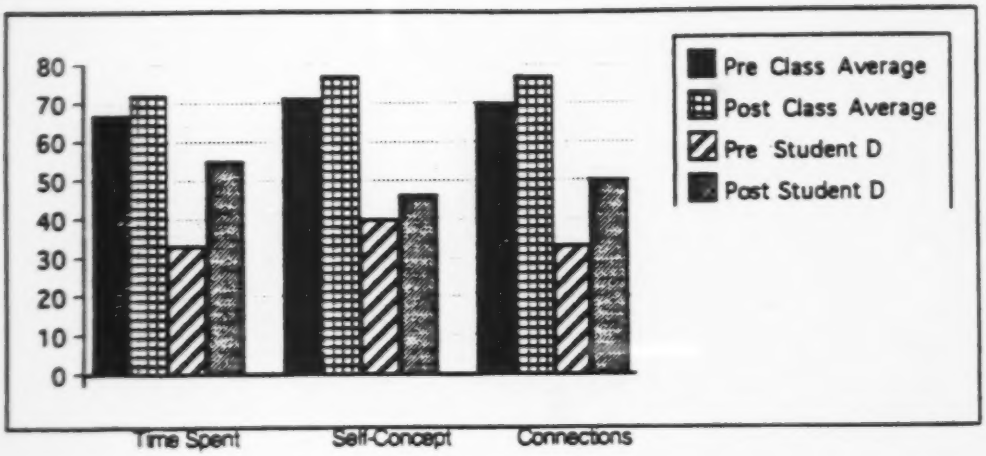

Figure 7

First Grade Student D

Student B

Student B could be described as a student whose academic and social development were appropriate for his grade level. Student B was very critical of his own performance. He had trouble accepting any redirection or constructive criticism.

The analysis of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D) revealed a need to increase Student B's vocabulary and factual comprehension. During the course of the intervention several strategies were implemented to assist in strengthening the student's reading skill. Story Webs and graphic organizers were among those used. At the onset of the at home Incentive Reading Program Student B demonstrated great enthusiasm. His parents were very supportive of the program and communicated this through notes and during conferences. Upon analysis of the pre and post Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey as seen in Figure 5, the researcher saw increases in Student B's scores to be consistent with his improved performance in the classroom. The student's increase in time spent reading reflected his enthusiasm and effort in the classroom and in the at home Incentive Reading Program. Student B benefited greatly from the creation of an environment that encouraged risk taking.

Student C

Student C showed a great deal of frustration during the first few weeks of school. He communicated that he did not want to read or write. Student C's parents expressed concern about his feelings of frustration. During the course of the case study he was able to meet the challenges of both reading and writing.

The analysis of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix D) revealed a

need to strengthen Student C's factual comprehension. During the course of the intervention several strategies were implemented, including Story Webs and other graphic organizers. Oral reading interviews were also helpful in assessing progress. The researcher met with Student C's parents to keep close tabs on any changes in his attitude. During a Reading Workshop conference the student shared that he had difficulty remembering what he had read. The researcher monitored Student C's recall by having him do a short retell following the reading of limited text. This enabled him to have successful experiences.

Upon analysis of the pre and post Modified Denver Reading Attitude Survey as seen in Figure 6, the researcher found that Student C increased in all three areas. Student C's attitude concerning reading and writing improved greatly. He had a very successful experience during the course of the intervention.

Student D

Student D could be described as a student who lacked self- motivation. She was able to perform at grade level expectation but was constantly looking for the easy way out. Student D's parents communicated problems with her motivation during the previous school year as well.

The analysis of the pre Modified Denver Reading Survey as seen in Figure 1 revealed a need to strengthen all three of the targeted areas. It also indicated that time spent reading needed the most attention. During the course of the intervention the researcher found that conferences which focused on the student's efforts were very helpful in fostering self-esteem and self-motivation. The researcher found it interesting that Student D's improvements in time spent reading transferred to an increase in an ability to make meaningful connections.

The parental support during the intervention had a major impact on her success.

Upon analysis of the pre and post Modified Denver Survey as seen in Figure 7, Student D improved in all three areas with the greatest improvement shown in time spent reading and making connections. Student D showed a great deal of improvement during the intervention.

In summary, the researcher has reconsidered the accuracy with which some first grade students are able to reflect on themselves and their experience with reading. Due to the developmental stage of first graders during the first quarter of school, in the future the researcher will be considering other options or modifications such as oral interviews in place of the Modified Denver Reading Survey (Appendix A) . The case study approach has been seen by the researcher as a positive experience. It has provided an opportunity to better understand his students' perception of the reading process which in turn has affirmed his philosophy of the importance of the learning environment as being one that is safe and encourages risk taking. The researcher has also found that the district curriculum provides a great deal of opportunity for this type of successful experience.

Second Grade

Student A was the youngest boy in the targeted second grade classroom. He was a tall child and appeared much older than a boy who had just turned 7 in August. Student A was a year younger than several of his classmates. Behavior, both in and out of the classroom, was noted as being immature. Student A had difficulty with time on task and was easily distracted by other activities occurring in the classroom. Fine motor skills , both printing and drawing , were weak. He did not take his job as a student seriously.

Upon analysis of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix E) the areas of comprehension that needed strengthening were found to be evaluation and inference. The strategies chosen by the researchers to improve both of these areas were Connect Two, CLOZE, Character Web, Say Something, RAP and RAQ. These strategies directly taught and modeled by the second grade researcher were somewhat successful in regards to Student A. It was noted by the researcher, during the implementation, that Student A had a difficult time getting his thinking down on paper, but progress had being made. While reading a biography about Jackie Robinson, Student A's response to what you'll remember the most about this character was, "No matter what Jackie Robinson did he did his best and didn't give up."

Student A appeared to be very involved with his reading. It was only through interviewing and conferencing that the researcher discovered that to Student A reading was "knowing words" and to become a better reader you practiced words to learn "all the words." Student A selected reading material that he could decode. He didn't always connect meaning to the words. Through discussion and questioning the researcher was able to direct Student A to material that he could decode and comprehend.

Student A's involvement in the at home reading program showed improvement throughout the intervention. A parent signature on the reading sheet indicated support from home.

In analyzing the results of the pre and post Modified Denver Reading Survey the data gathered showed that time spent reading increased (Figure 8). This was consistent with Student A's involvement with the at home reading program. Student A's self-concept remained the same. This also was consistent with what the researcher observed in the classroom. The area of

making connections decreased by 16%. This could be explained by the fact that Student A continued to chose reading materials that he could decode but not comprehend. When this occurred in the classroom the researcher would redirect the student into appropriate text. Although the researcher felt that connections occurred within the classroom setting, the reading material used for at home reading was not monitored by the researcher. Student A spent at home reading time engaged in literature that was not appropriate for his ability level.

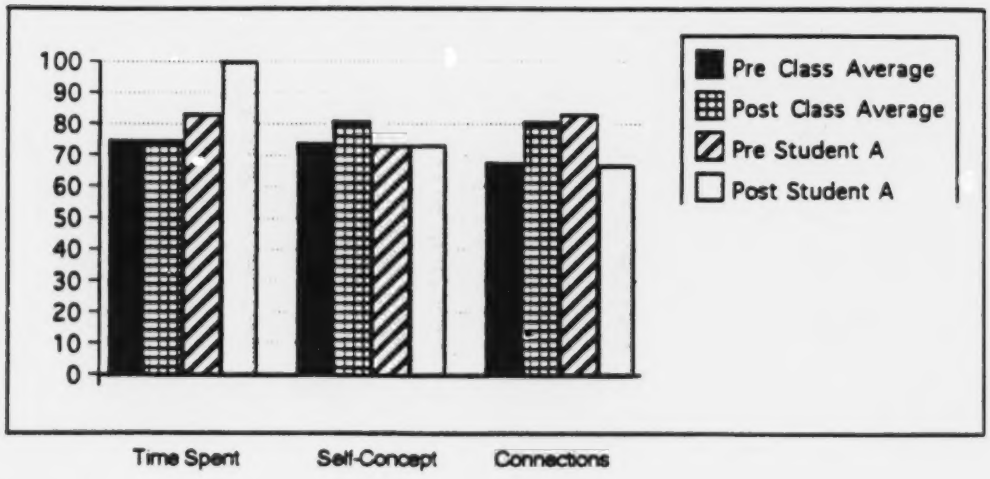

Figure 8

Second Grade Student A

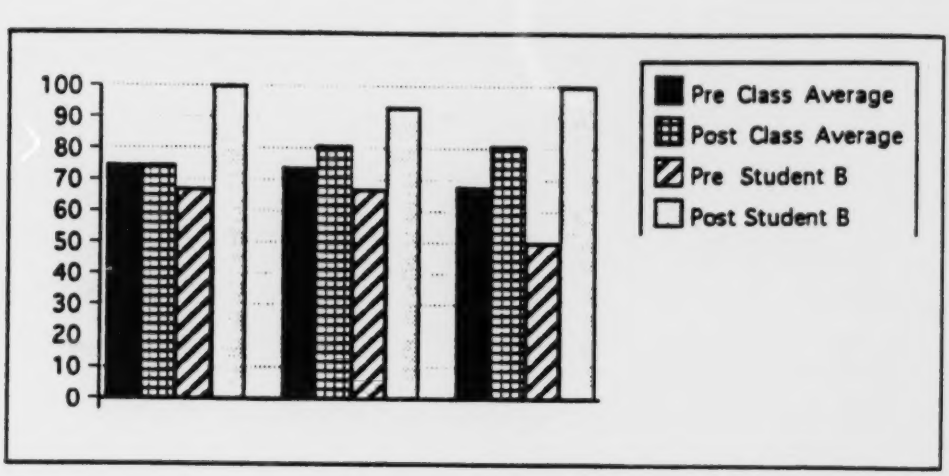

Figure 9

Second Grade Student B

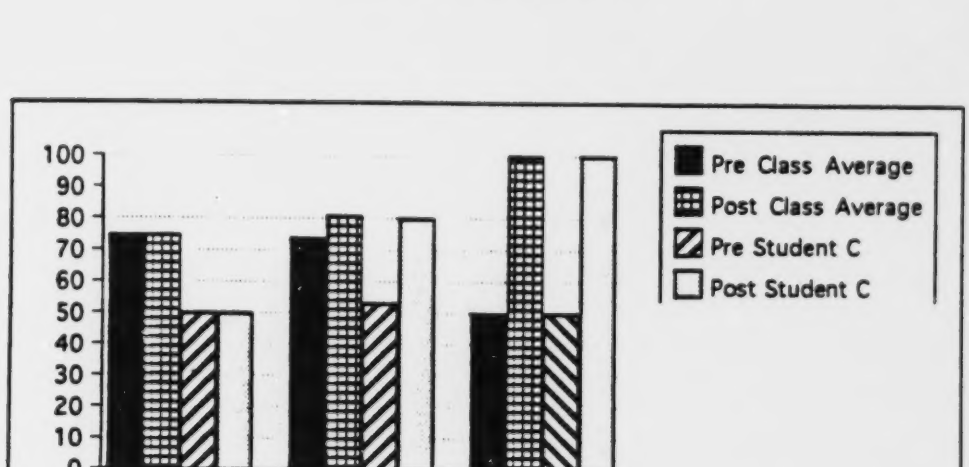

Figure 10

Second Grade Student C

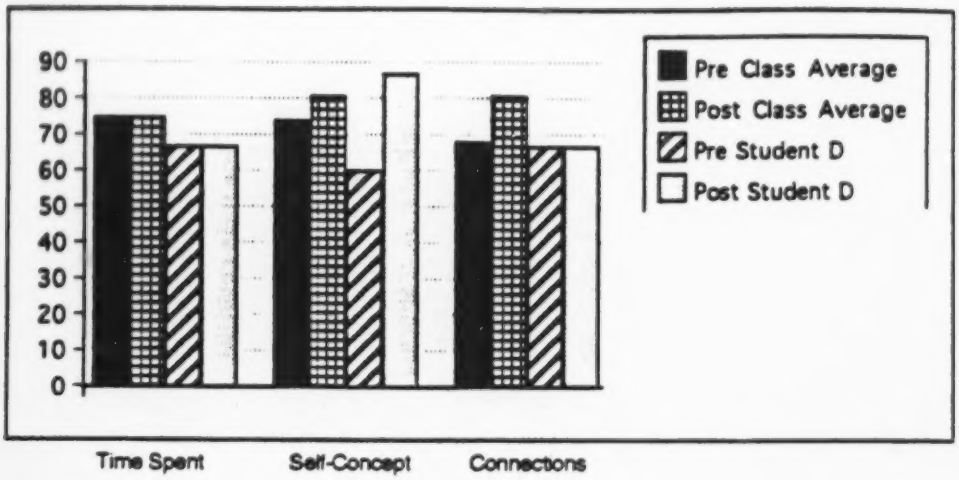

Figure 11

Second Grade Student D

Student B

In analyzing the pre and post data of the Modified Denver Reading Survey, it can be seen in Figure 9, that Student B made gains in all three areas. Records kept of time spent reading do not correspond with the increase of 23%. The researcher, however feels that Student B was indeed more engaged in her reading and began to view reading as a process rather than the isolated skill of decoding words. She learned through several implemented strategies to set a purpose for reading, how to respond as a reader, and how to make connections with the written text. Her self-concept as a reader increased because she had learned to make meaningful connections with other readers in the classroom and had developed a more mature perception of the reading process.

Student C

Upon analysis of the pre and post data as it appears in Figure 10 it was found that Student C's time spent reading showed no increase. Student C, from the onset of the planned interventions, was an engaged learner and may have been unaware of the significant increase of reading documented both at home and at school. Student C consistently read more than the weekly requirement of one hour and 15 minutes. Student C's self-concept showed a significant increase of 27%. During an informal reading conference, Student C responded to a question by saying, "I think I'm a pretty good reader. I listen to others in class. I listen to people teaching me how and I get better the older I get." Student C's thinking was supported by others and his level of confidence increased. The most significant increase was in his ability to make connections. Student C learned that being able to read and understand words helped both in and out of school. The example of the importance placed on reading by his parents provided a positive role model and suggestions made at school supported Student C's reading efforts.

Student D

In analyzing the pre and post data of the Modified Denver Reading Survey as seen in Figure 11, it can be seen that Student D showed growth only in the area of self-concept. From the onset of the intervention, Student D consistently read only the minimum weekly requirement of the at home Incentive Reading Program. Despite the fact that weekly recording sheets were returned with a parent signature, extra incentives and verbal encouragement did nothing to spark Student D's enthusiasm for reading. Student D did become a confident reader. His word recognition increased as did his fluency. When purposes were established for reading he was able to make connections.

It was noted by the researcher that he was able to make literal connections with the text but was unable to make inferential interpretations. It was this researcher's observation that this was consistent with his thinking across other curricular areas. Student D continues to view reading as an isolated skill and not as a process by which to gain knowledge and pleasure.

In summary, it became evident through the course of the intervention that the students in the second grade classroom had become increasingly more engaged in the reading process. This researcher valued the case study approach as one which fostered in-depth interaction with individual students. It also facilitated expansion of the researcher's repertoire of teachable reading strategies. And finally, the at home Incentive Reading Program fostered the development of valuable study habits and accepting responsibility toward life long learning.

Third Grade

Student A

Student A is a child of less than average stature who appears to be intensely motivated to demonstrate success in all areas of the curriculum, including activities which require physical prowess. He is a child who consistently shows determination to do well and is what might be termed an over-achiever. Because he is so intense about doing well in all his work, he at times bordered on the fringe of emotional upset when he felt he had not performed up to his standard of expectation. It was very important to him to show that he could do what was expected.

Upon analysis of the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix F) it was determined that the areas of evaluative and inferential comprehension were somewhat weak. To build these areas Connect Two and character webs were

introduced in conjunction with core books. Also the use of a technique called Say Something was used to provide frequent opportunities for making inferences and connections to materials being read. Based on teacher observation the strategies implemented to support growth in these areas were successful as reflected in journal responses to classroom literature as well as during oral discussions.

Through conferencing during Reading Workshop, it was found that Student A was attempting to read books too difficult for his reading level capabilities. This could explain the initial indication of low self-concept toward reading ability indicated by Figure 12. Further questioning revealed the fact that peer pressure played a major influence in choice of books being read as opposed to his making a choice based upon personal interest and reading level. Student A was directed to appropriate books and as the intervention continued it became evident through his willingness to share, that reading at the appropriate level ensured success and increased pleasure.

Student A's participation in the at home incentive reading program was consistent throughout the intervention. The parental signature indicated support from home.

In analyzing the pre and post test results of the Modified Denver Reading Survey it can be noted that student perception of time spent reading remained constant. This can be attributed to the fact that Student A came into the intervention as an enthusiastic and motivated reader. His self-concept improved because he became more discriminating about his choice of reading material. Because it fell within his range of reading capabilities, his self-concept improved with his success. And finally, the more he read at an appropriate level, the more he was able to make meaningful connections to his reading.

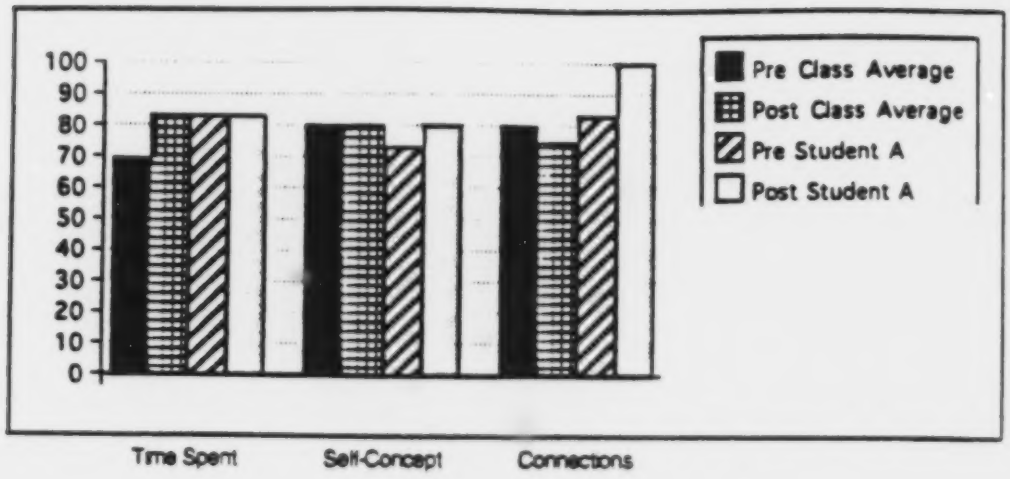

Figure 12

Third Grade Student A

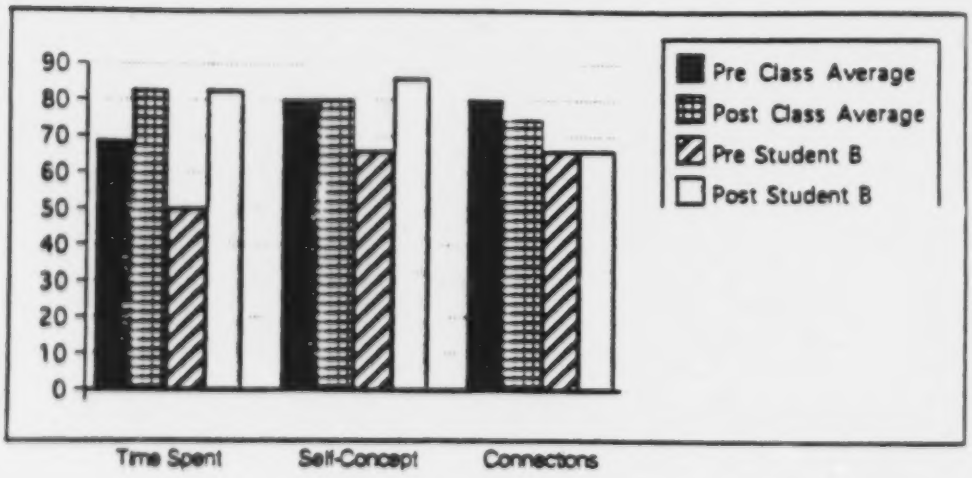

Figure 13

Third Grade Student B

Figure 14

Third Grade Student C

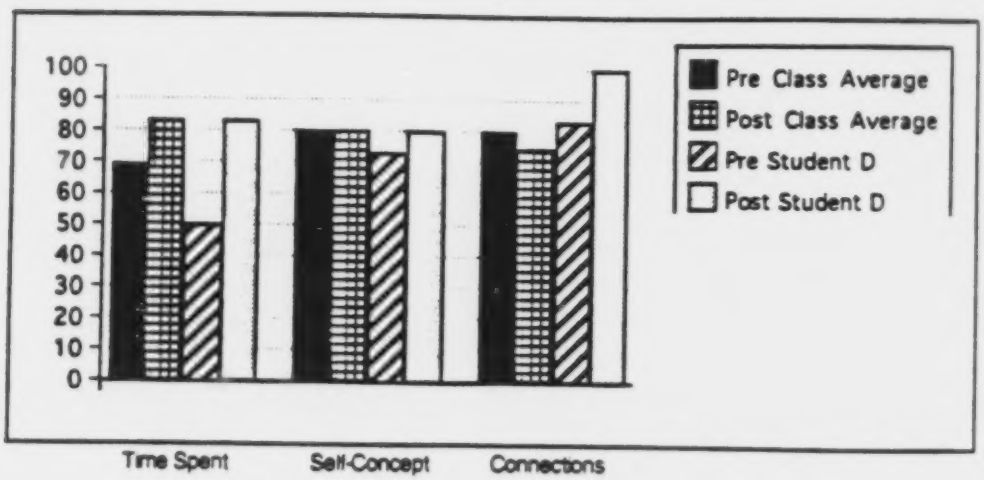

Figure 15

Third Grade Student D

Student B

In analyzing the pre and post test results of Student B (Figure 13) it may appear that significant gains were made in the amount of time spent in outside reading. However, it is the researcher's observation that contrary to the student's self-assessment of time spent in outside reading, the failure to hand in a weekly signed reading sheet indicated that this student did not consistently participate. This student also had difficulty focusing during direct instruction of reading strategies. Though some gains were made in student perception of self-concept toward reading, the ability to make meaningful connections failed to show any gains. This student's difficulty with focusing in class and the inconsistency with outside reading appear to have resulted in an over-all inability to make significant gains in reading comprehension.

Student C

As can be seen in Figure 14, Student C showed gains in perception of the amount of time spent in outside reading. His participation in the Incentive Reading Program fulfilled the minimum requirement of two hours per week but during the course of several conferences it was indicated by the student that those hours required much effort on his part and that the requirement was viewed more as an obligation to be met than an enjoyable opportunity. This student's perception of reading as a process by which to learn and make meaningful connections was indeed inhibited by his attitude toward reading. Attempts were made throughout the intervention to direct him to books which he might find enjoyable, however, these suggestions did not seem to meet with success, which supports the old adage that "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink!"

Student D

Student D is an extremely talkative and enthusiastic third grader who demonstrated high determination and self-motivation throughout the intervention. As can be noted in Figure 15, the amount of time spent reading after implementation of the strategies increased markedly. This student was determined to earn as many keys as possible. A parent conference revealed that getting this child to read outside of school prior to implementation of the at home Incentive Reading Program was difficult, if not impossible. Introducing a tangible weekly reward provided the most significant motivation for reading for this child. As a result of the increased time spent reading, Student D showed significant gains in both his self-concept of reading ability and in an ability to make meaningful connections to his reading.

In summary, this researcher feels that a strong at home Incentive Reading Program is crucial to gains made in reading comprehension. The incentive program must be one which is developmentally appropriate and interesting to the students involved. The use of individual key rings and the distribution of colorful keys each week proved to be highly motivating to this class of third graders. The overall participation of the class reflected very favorably upon the theme chosen and the enthusiasm with which it was met was expressed over and over again during conferences with parents. Keeping a very colorful and visible weekly record not only helped to maintain a high student interest but also sent a message of the importance placed on reading in this classroom.

This researcher felt that the format of case study provided worthwhile and valuable in-depth insights into the targeted students reading abilities. These insights lent themselves to developing purposeful daily reading lessons. The

opportunity to dialogue with individual students increased this researcher's knowledge and understanding of the cognitive processes of third graders and reinforced the philosophy that each child must be viewed as an individual with unique learning styles and capabilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The interventions used by the researchers included implementation of reading comprehension strategies, a reading workshop and an at home reading incentive program to strengthen the reading comprehension skills of the targeted case study students in the first, second and third grade classrooms.

The researchers were in full agreement that the interventions employed were very successful and beneficial to all concerned. The strategies used were found to assist all of the students in the targeted classrooms. Each of the researchers stated that as they consider the implementation of this program for the future the use of these strategies would be invaluable.

Upon reflection of the Reading Workshop it was determined by the first grade researcher that this component of the program provided the cornerstone of success for not only the targeted students but for all students in the classroom. Both the second and third grade researchers identified this aspect of the program to have been the most useful vehicle for clarification and assessment of literacy interaction between student and teacher. The opportunity to implement the strategies and to have individual conferences gave them feedback which helped them to better meet the needs of their students. The Reading Workshops were also beneficial in that they provided an atmosphere which allowed the students to be engaged with genres at their independent reading level.

The at home Reading Incentive Program helped to improve reading

comprehension skills by providing opportunities to practice these strategies. It also helped to increase the knowledge base and ability to make meaningful connections . Several of the parents from each of the targeted classrooms communicated that this portion of the program impacted the importance placed on reading in their homes. The researchers saw this as an additional benefit of the program which helped foster the importance of developing reading as a life long recreational activity.

The at home Reading Incentive Program helped the researcher in the first grade classroom to better understand the developmental needs of the students at first grade. These needs are so diverse that a wide range of text would help to insure a smooth transition as readers' skills improve.

The very nature of this research project enabled the researchers to gain insights into the entire process of reading development as opposed to looking at isolated skills.

In the future, as the researchers implement these successful interventions they will be using the knowledge gained through this experience to select or create assessment tools which would more accurately reflect student growth. The researchers feel that the tools used for assessment did not clearly measure the growth of reading comprehension performance. For future studies, the researchers would recommend that both the pre and post methods of assessment systematically measure all areas of oral reading comprehension. It was felt that as a pretest the Basic Reading Inventory (Appendix C) clearly defined areas of comprehension which needed strengthening, however, this type of tool was not available for assessing post intervention results.

In conclusion, the researchers have found this study to have been a rich

learning experience for all. We have reaffirmed our belief that for children to become successful readers it is imperative that strategies be modeled and directly taught and that an abundance of opportunities be provided for engagement in the process of reading. The researchers believe this is a valuable program and will continue to use it for the remainder of the school year. A modified version of this program will be implemented again in the fall of 1996.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Name _____ Grade _____

Teacher _____ Date _____

Modified Denver Reading Survey

Make a circle around the answer that is most true for you.

How often do you do each of the following things?

	Almost every day	Sometimes	Never
1. Get so interested in something you're reading that you don't want to stop.	A	B	C
2. Tell a friend about a good book.	A	B	C
3. Read on your own outside of school.	A	B	C
4. Read about something because you are curious about it.	A	B	C
5. Read more than one book by an author you like.	A	B	C

6. What kind of reader do you think you are?

   A. A very good reader.

   B. A good reader.

   C. An average reader.

   D. A poor reader.

   E. A very poor reader.

The following statements are true about some people. They may or may not be true for you, or they may be true for you only part of the time. How often is each of the following sentences true for you?

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
7. Reading helps me learn about myself.	A	B	C
8. I feel good about how fast I can read.	A	B	C
9. Reading helps me understand why people feel or act the way they do.	A	B	C
10. I believe reading helps me when I'm not in school.	A	B	C
11. I feel proud about what I can read.	A	B	C
12. Reading helps me see what it might be like to live in a different place or in a different time.	A	B	C

	Almost Always	Sometimes	Never
13. Being able to read well is important to me.	A	B	C
14. I can understand what I read in school.	A	B	C
15. Other people think I read well.	A	B	C
16. I learn worthwhile things from reading books.	A	B	C

Appendix B

Modified Denver Reading Survey
Selected Questions Used to Identify Targeted Students

Time Spent Reading

1. Get so interested in something you're reading that you don't want to stop
3. Read on your own outside of school.

Self-Concept of Reading Ability

6. What kind of reader do you think you are?
7. Reading helps me learn about myself.
11. I feel proud about what I can read.
13. Being able to read well is important to me.
15. Other people think I can read well.

Ability to Make Connections

9. Reading helps me understand why people feel or act the way they do.
10. I believe reading helps me when I am not in school.

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Appendix C

Silvia Pakulski

BASIC READING INVENTORY PERFORMANCE BOOKLET

Jerry L. Johns
Northern Illinois University

B
Silent Reading

Student _____ Grade _____ Sex: M F Date of Test: _____

School: _____ Examiner: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____ Current Book/Level: _____ Age: _____

SUMMARY OF STUDENT'S READING PERFORMANCE

Grade	Word Recognition				Comprehension					
	Isolation (Word Lists)				Context (Passages)		Oral Reading Form A		Silent Reading Form B	
	Sight	Analysis	Total	Level	Miscues	Level	Questions Missed	Level	Questions Missed	Level
PP										
P										
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9					ESTIMATE OF READING LEVELS					
10					Independent _____ Instructional _____ Frustration _____					

LISTENING LEVEL

Grade	Form ____ Questions Missed	Level
PP		
P		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

ESTIMATED LEVEL: _____

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

INFORMAL MISCUE ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Types of Miscues	Frequency of Occurrence			General Impact of Miscues on Meaning		
	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	No Change	Little Change	Much Change
Substitutions						
Insertions						
Omissions						
Reversals						
Repetitions						

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Appendix D

Summary of the First Grade Students
Oral Comprehension Performance
Basic Reading Inventory

Analysis By Type Of Question

	Fact	Topic	Evaluation	Inference	Vocab
Student A					
Ratio Missed	4/30	0/6	0/6	0/12	2/6
Percent Missed	13%	0%	0%	0%	33%
Student B					
Ratio Missed	5/30	0/6	0/6	1/12	1/6
Percent Missed	16%	0%	0%	8%	16%
Student C					
Ratio Missed	7/30	0/6	0/6	0/12	0/6
Percent Missed	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student D					
Ratio Missed	6/30	1/6	1/6	1/12	2/6
Percent Missed	20%	16%	16%	8%	33%
Student E					
Ratio Missed	7/30	1/6	0/6	3/12	0/6
Percent Missed	23%	16%	0%	25%	0%
Student F					
Ratio Missed	4/30	0/6	1/6	1/12	0/6
Percent Missed	13%	0%	16%	8%	0%

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Appendix E

Summary of the Second Grade Students
Oral Comprenension Perfomance
Basic Reading Inventory

Analysis By Type Of Question

	Fact	Topic	Evaluation	Inference	Vocab
Student A					
Ratio Missed	6/30	0/6	3/6	5/12	1/6
Percent Missed	20%	0%	50%	42%	17%
Student B					
Ratio Missed	9/30	0/6	3/6	2/12	1/6
Percent Missed	30%	0%	50%	17%	17%
Student C					
Ratio Missed	8/25	0/5	3/5	4/10	1/5
Percent Missed	32%	0%	60%	40%	20%
Student D					
Ratio Missed	12/20	1/4	2/4	2/8	2/4
Percent Missed	60%	25%	50%	25%	50%
Student E					
Ratio Missed	7/30	0/6	3/6	2/12	0/6
Percent Missed	23%	0%	50%	17%	0%
Student F					
Ratio Missed	7/25	0/5	3/5	2/10	3/5
Percent Missed	28%	0%	60%	20%	60%

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Appendix F

Summary of the Third Grade Students'
Oral Comprehension Performance
Basic Reading Inventory

Analysis By Type Of Question

	Fact	Topic	Evaluation	Inference	Vocab
Student A					
Ratio Missed	3/30	0/6	1/6	2/12	0/6
Percent Missed	10%	0%	17%	17%	0%
Student B					
Ratio Missed	3/25	1/5	2/5	5/10	0/5
Percent Missed	52%	20%	40%	50%	0%
Student C					
Ratio Missed	6/30	1/6	1/6	1/12	0/6
Percent Missed	20%	17%	17%	8%	0%
Student D					
Ratio Missed	5/30	0/6	1/6	2/12	0/6
Percent Missed	17%	0%	18%	17%	0%
Student E					
Ratio Missed	5/25	2/5	1/5	3/10	0/5
Percent Missed	40%	40%	20%	30%	0%
Student F					
Ratio Missed	4/30	0/6	3/6	5/12	0/6
Percent Missed	13%	0%	50%	42%	0%

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Appendix G

Reading Interview

1. When you are reading and come to something you don't know, what do you do?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   Do you ever do anything else?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. Who do you know who is a good reader?

   _____

3. What makes _____a good reader?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Do you think_____ever comes to something she/he doesn't know?

   _____

5. If question 4 is yes: When_____does come to something she/he doesn't know, what do you think she/he does?

   If question 4 is no: Suppose _____comes to something that she/he doesn't know. What do you think she/

he would do?

6. If you know someone was having trouble reading, how would you help that person?

7. What would a/your teacher do to help that person?

8. How did you learn to read?

9. What would you like to do better as a reader?

10. Do you think you are a good reader? Why?

Appendix H

RETELLING ASSESSMENT

Student's Name_____ Date_____
Title/Author of Story_____
Type of Retelling:
Guided/Unguided Oral/Written Listened to/Read

Sense of Story Structure:		Comments:
Setting:		
Begins story with introduction	____	_____
Includes time and/or place	____	_____
Characters:		
Names main character	____	_____
Mentions supporting characters	____	_____
Problem:		
Refers to main character's goal or problem	____	_____
Events:		
Recalls significant events	____	_____
Puts events in proper sequence	____	_____
Language:		
Incorportates story language	____	_____
Solution:		
Incorporates resolution in ending	____	_____
Theme:		
Refers to theme of story	____	_____
Total Score	____	

Comments:

Adapted From Portfolios and Beyond: Collaborative Assessment in reading and Writing, Susan Glazer, Carol Brown

Appendix I

Literature Log

Date	Title: Author:
Date	Title: Author:
Date	Title: Author:
Date	Title: Author:
Date	Title: Author:

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Appendix J

What We Can Write About Books

1. What it is about
2. The funniest part
3. The saddest part
4. Your favorite part
5. The happiest part
6. Something you learned
7. The scariest part
8. Characters
9. Something about the author
10. An exciting part
11. Illustrations
12. Something unusual
13. What you will remember the most
14. The ending

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Appendix K

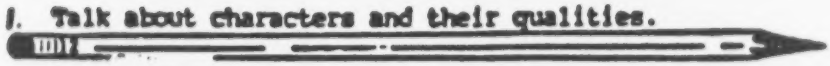
Journal Starters

1. This book makes me feel...
2. This book makes me think about...
3. The thing in this book which is similar to my life is...
4. I learned...
5. I liked/ did not like...
6. I would recommend this to..
7. I predict that the next thing to happen will be...
8. The thing I like best about this book is...
9. This author is good because...
10. I decided to read this book because...

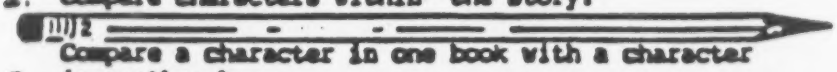
Appendix L

"WRITE" TO THE POINT

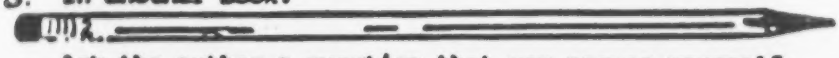
1. Talk about characters and their qualities.



2. Compare characters within the story.

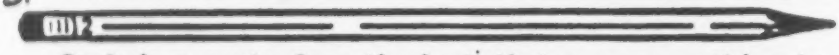


3. Compare a character in one book with a character in another book.

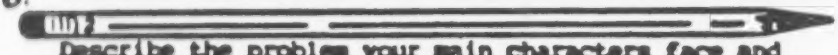


4. Ask the author a question that you answer yourself.

5. Explain why a character or story is meaningful to you.



6. Include a quote from the book that means something to you.



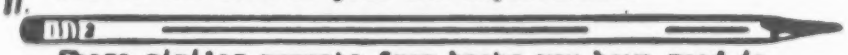
7. Describe the problem your main characters face and predict how they will solve it.

8. Talk about why you think the author wrote this book.

9. Write a recommendation for a book you've been reading.

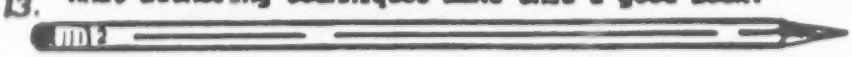
10. Discuss the importance of the setting in your book.

11. Relate the book to your own experiences.

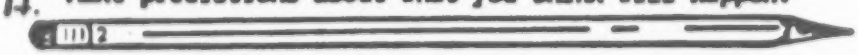


12. Share similar moments from books you have read in the past.

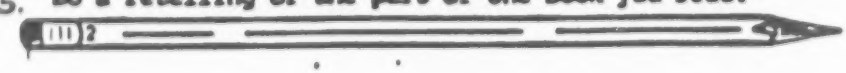
13. What authoring techniques make this a good book.



14. Make predictions about what you think will happen.



15. Do a retelling of the part of the book you read.



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Appendix M

Name_____ **Date**_____

Please color in an X for every 6 minutes of reading.

My first 6 minutes of reading is done.

I have read my second time for 6 minutes.

I am doing a great job of reading and have finished another 6 minutes.

My help from home has been great as I have finished 6 more minutes.

I am ready to turn in my reading record. I have read for 30 minutes.

The title of the book or books that I have read:_____

_____

_____

_____

Name_____ **Date**_____

Please color in an x for every 12 minutes of reading.

My first 12 minutes of reading is done.

I have read my second time for 12 minutes.

I am doing a great job of reading and have finished another 12 minutes.

My help from home has been great as I have finished 12 more minutes.

I am ready to turn in my reading record. I have read for 60 minutes.

The title of the book or books that I have read:_____

_____

_____

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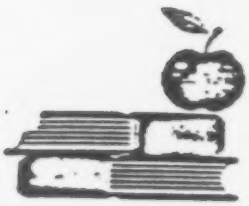
Appendix O

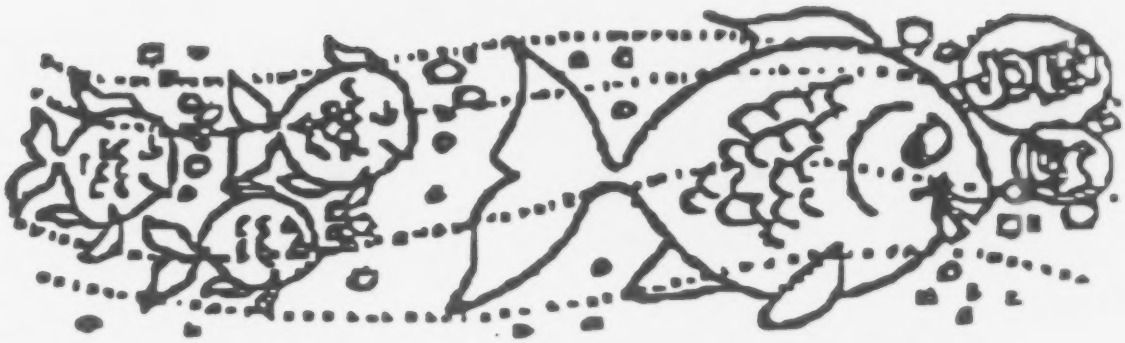


READING RECORD

Title	Author	Date

Appendix P

2C'S SCHOOL OF READERS



Dear Parents,

As part of my 2nd grade reading program each student is required to read a minimum of 1 hour a week at home, during the 1st quarter. This reading can be done independently or as a shared reading - parent and child together.

A recording sheet will be sent home every Thursday and that sheet should be returned, signed by a parent, on the following Thursday.

For every 15 minutes your child reads have them color in 1 fish.

Your child will receive a fish sticker for each hour they have spent reading. These stickers will be placed on an underwater scene sheet that will be kept at school.

For every 5 hours of reading (from the class total) I will place a fish on the wall. It will be fun watching our "school" grow!

Thank you for your cooperation!

Happy Reading,

Linda Ciccone

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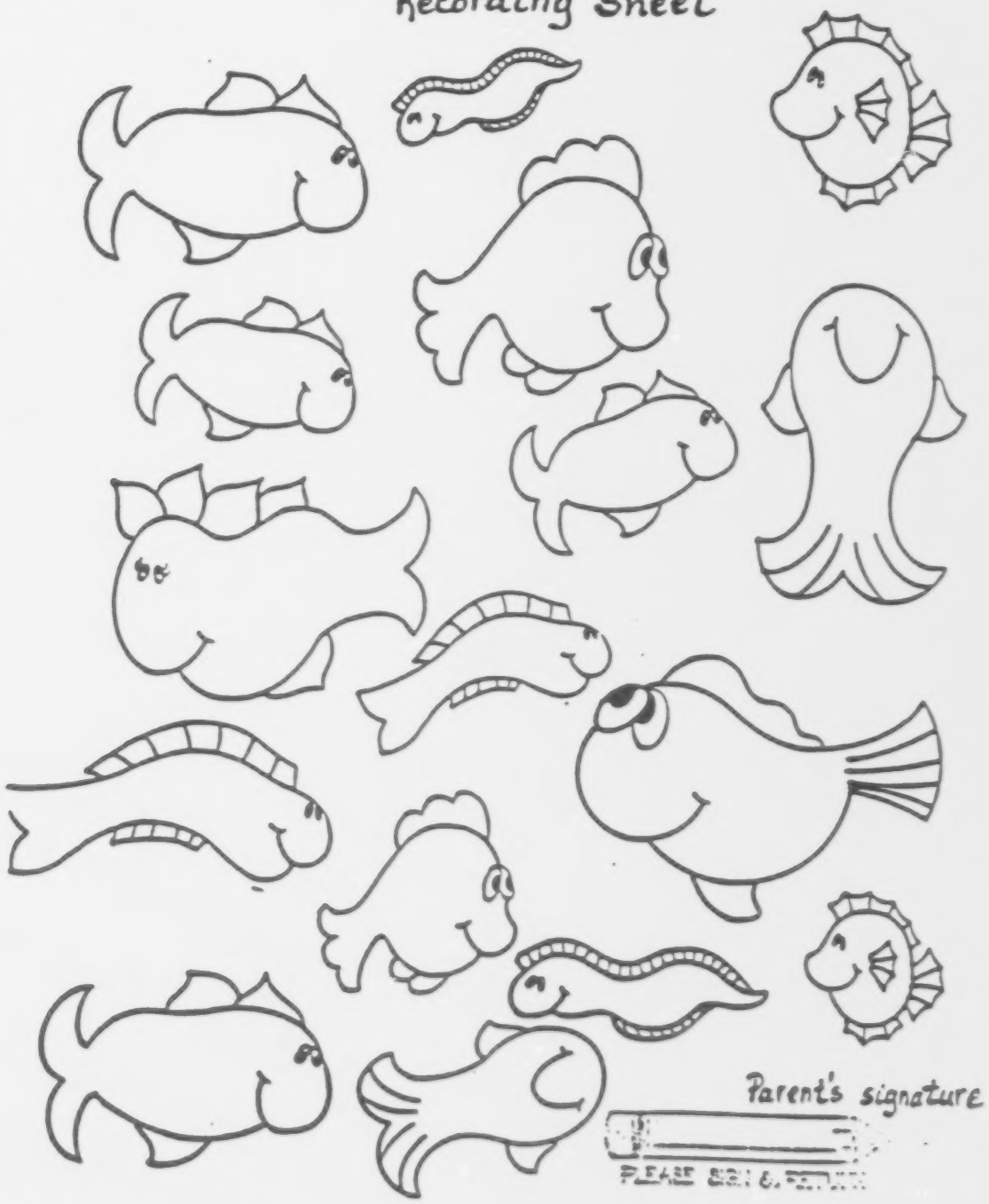
Appendix Q

Name: _____ Week of _____

Recording Sheet



Parent's signature

_____

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN

Name:

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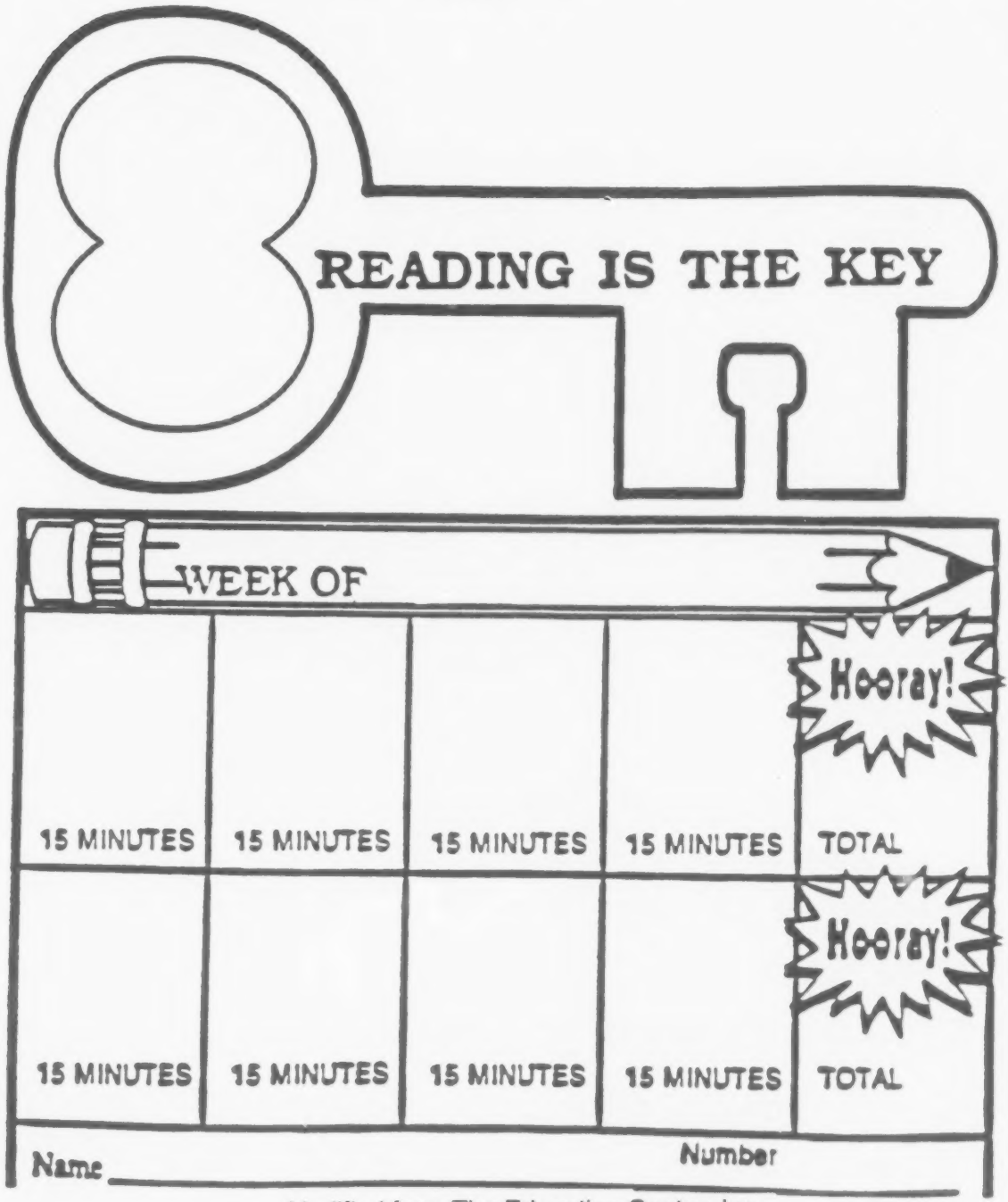
Appendix S



Modified from The Education Center, Inc.
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